

REFUGE NARRATIVE REPORT

Kenai National Moose Range

September--December 1948

This report, the initial one for the Kenai Nat'l Moose Range, covers the period following the assignment of personnel to the area in September to December 31. The Refuge Manager arrived on the area Sept. 9. Headquarters were established in the town of Kenai on Alaska Game Commission property within the town. James D. Peterson was assigned as Refuge Enforcement Agent and entered on active duty Sept. 30, 1948. During the period much of the activities were concerned with development of headquarters facilities, construction of secondary quarters and organization of equipment for efficient operation. This report, following the standardized outline, covers only such items as are applicable at this time.

I GENERAL

A. Weather conditions. The fall was normal except for a slightly earlier freezeup. Cold weather for a period of two weeks in November froze the ground to a depth of 2½ feet before any appreciable snow cover came. Light snow arrived in November followed by heavier snows in late December which covered the Range with 1-2 feet of snow. Skilak and Tustumena Lakes were entirely frozen by the middle of December.

C. Fires. None on the area during the period.

II WILDLIFE

A. Migratory Birds. Transient waterfowl were observed to use four main areas within the Range: (1) the tidal flats at the mouth of the Chickaloon River, (2) the Kenai River and adjacent small marshes, (3) Skilak Lake and (4) Tustumena Lake. Occasional use was made of the small inland lakes. Approximately 20 Whistling Swan remained until freeze-up on the Moose River close to its junction with the Kenai. An occasional pair were noted on inland lakes in the northern part of the Range. Mallard, Widgeon, Pintail and mergansers were the principal species noted. No geese were observed, however, some were reported and four of the Canada goose species were taken during the hunting season in the Kenai River area. The maximum transient waterfowl population on the area is estimated at 2000 birds.

C. Big Game Animals.
Moose

Heavy snow cover in late December provided favorable conditions for aircraft moose census. Reconnaissance flights were made Dec. 28 & 29 to check concentration areas and to determine the distribution of moose over the range.

A more intensive flight was made over the Tustumena-Skilak unit to get a rough estimate of the total population

and to provide a basis for the formulation of methods to be used in the making of more accurate inventory flights. This area is bounded on the north by the Kenai River and Skilak Lake, on the southwest by Tustumena Lake, on the west by Cook Inlet and on the east by the mountains. The unit comprises roughly 500 square miles and is the area covered by the 1938 Palmer reports. A total of 606 moose were tallied on this area. It is calculated that 230-250 square miles or about half the area was covered by this flight. On the basis of this count, it is believed that the present population is at least equal to the 1938 estimate of 1033 moose for this area. At this time, with 1-2 feet of snow, moose were widely distributed, extending to the limits of tree growth on the mountain slopes. It is not known how much this population may be due to ingress from the burned area adjacent to the north. The burned area now has a small, widely distributed moose population of roughly 1 moose to 2-3 square miles.

Four concentration areas were noted at this time as follows:

1. Kasilof Area--178 moose.
2. Hill 3 mi. NW of Lake Tustumena--herd of 60 animals.
3. Funny River Plate--herd of 55 animals.
4. Kenai--27 moose within 2 miles of town.

Vegetation on the Kasilof area is now heavily utilized, indicating an overbrowsed condition. This condition is not prevalent over the entire range, but it is believed to exist over much of the area in which high populations are now found.

Twenty-seven bulls, or an estimated 10-15 percent of the bull population, still retained antlers as of Dec. 29.

- D. Other Mammals. Snowshoe rabbits, now on the upgrade, are still low in numbers. They now exist only in certain areas--Kenai, Kasilof and on the east edge near Skilak Lake.
 Lynx--only one recent, unverified report.
 Coyote--sparsely scattered over the area, more numerous in the Kasilof area.
 Wolf--one recent report 10 miles east of the Moose Range.
 Fur animals in general reported as low.

III REFUGE DEVELOPMENT

- A. Physical Development. Four Pacific Huts, war surplus at Kodiak, were dismantled and shipped to Kenai.

Two huts were erected together, following a plan furnished by the Central Office, to serve as quarters for the Refuge Enforcement Agent. Construction is nearing completion on this secondary quarters and should be ready for occupancy within 2-3 weeks. Another hut was erected to house the electric plant and for storage. The fourth hut is to be used as a garage for the two trucks. A log house on the property was made weather tight for the winter. For the present it is planned to use this building for a shop and storage. Work on the main quarters this fall was largely of a minor maintenance nature. As soon as possible in the spring, it is planned to paint the house and install a concrete foundation.

- C. Collections. 4 Willow Ptarmigan skins--Refuge collection.

IV ECONOMIC USE OF REFUGE

- C. Fur Harvest. Thirty-seven hunting and trapping licenses were issued in the area. However, only nine of these persons are now engaged in trapping on the area. To date trapping success has been reported as very poor. It is believed that more of the trapping licenses will be utilized during the beaver season.

VI PUBLIC RELATIONS

B. Refuge Visitors.

Name		Time on area
J. N. Ball	U. S. F & W	4 days
R. Griffith	"	4 "
C. J. Rhode	"	1 "
L. Bragg	"	1 "
W. J. Elkins	"	2 "
D. Ralston	"	2 "
W. Allen	"	5 "
M. Kelly	"	1 "
E. Chatelain	"	1 "
H. F. Quick	Arctic Institute	5 "

- D. Hunting. The portion of the Range north of the Kenai River was closed to hunting while that below the River was open to moose hunting Sept. 1-15 & Dec. 1-5. The major part of the hunting in both seasons was in the Kenai-River-Kasilof area, although in the September season some hunting was done from Skilak and Tastanena Lakes. The kill in the Kenai-Kasilof area during the December season is estimated at 35 moose. Less information was obtained on the kill of the September season. However, it is believed that the total kill during the two seasons on the Moose Range did not exceed 100 animals. Although much of the hunting in the Kasilof area was done to the west of the Range boundary, the kill here may be considered as of those animals using the Range during part of the year. One cow was found shot and left in the woods during the December season. Reports of a few other such instances were received, but as yet have not been verified.

Jan. 3, 1949

David L. Spencer
Refuge Manager